



*All New Haven children, birth through 8 are healthy, safe, thriving in nurturing families  
and prepared to be successful lifelong learners.*

February 20, 2014

Senator Bye and Representative Walker and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Gail Ford and I am the Coordinator of the New Haven Early Childhood Council (NHECC). The Council's mission includes working to ensure that all children are prepared to be successful lifelong learners. The NHECC also serves as New Haven's School Readiness Council. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the NHECC.

**We support the creation and funding in legislation of the Office of Early Childhood;** this Office will be an important factor in coordinating existing as well as new early childhood programs in CT.

**We also support Governor Malloy's proposal to move CT towards universal Pre K.** Early education, especially for at risk children, can help to close the achievement gap by addressing it before it gets started. There will be a high rate of return on this investment.

Likewise, the **proposed 3% increase in Care4Kids rates for licensed centers and family child care providers is both welcome and necessary.** This is the first rate increase since 2002 and is long overdue. This is a first step in allowing poor working families to access quality child care. Quality in early education is much more than an affordable place to take children to while their parents are working; it's a nurturing and educationally based environment where children are encouraged to learn and develop. This is especially important for infants and toddlers. The first three years of a child's life is when most of their brain development occurs.

**The proposed 3% increase in School Readiness funds is also needed and very welcome.** It will help programs that are struggling to serve some of the most needy families. An increase of funding is an important factor in maintaining and improving quality.

The administrative fee of \$100,000 per School Readiness grant, however, needs revising. The fee for administration is \$100,000 regardless of the size of the grant and the number of slots. New Haven, a district that administers over 1000 slots and a budget of just under \$8million receives the same administrative fee as a district that has 40 slots. We ask that the fee to administer the School Readiness grant be calculated in a manner that is more reasonable and effective.

Finally, we want to express our concerns about the issues facing the early childhood workforce and New Haven's ability to meet the current legislation to have 50% of teachers with BA's by 2015 and 100% of teachers with BA's by 2020. The Council fully agrees that an essential component in high quality programs is staff that is both well educated and dedicated. There are several facts that make the existing timetable untenable. There are not enough teachers in New Haven to meet the legislative mandate; no universities/colleges in the New Haven area offer a BA degree in Early Childhood for current staff to attend; salary levels for preschool teachers are not high enough to attract college graduates with BA degrees in EC. We strongly recommend that the OEC and the CGA look at the data and develop a timeline that is more attainable.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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